

of a population problem. His little volume is a timely illustration of the rational approach to social issues at a period in Western culture when some of our fellow mammals are doing their utmost to disown their humanity.

In several important respects the author has oversimplified in the first few chapters some of the very complex issues involved in the present population situation—e.g. it is no longer true to say that Western population arrest or decline is attributable to a rise in the death-rate. It has indeed become very obvious in recent years that the problem of a steadily and inevitably declining population is attracting the urgent attention of many others besides statistical experts. The attempt to maintain the highly sophisticated and industrial civilization which still remains in such parts of Europe as the British Isles must meet with serious difficulty if not failure unless a variety of factors, some of them admittedly incompletely understood, can be interfered with so as to arrest a declining trend in a sinisterly falling curve of population increase. As an eminent biologist has recently had occasion to remind us, unless society is biologically as well as economically equipped, in four hundred years the population of England will dwindle to less than eight people, should an increase in fertility fail to occur.

Dr. White deals very competently with the objections to the practice of contraception which are as highly irrational as they are frequently repeated. He demonstrates with an able and clear pen the complete lack of social substance in such opposition. It does the cause of birth-control propaganda, however, little good and, perhaps, even much harm to claim more for it than is justified. It is highly unlikely that contraceptive practice will solve problems which are fundamentally economic in origin, although sensible contraceptive behaviour may materially aid in their solution. Dr. White's claims cannot therefore be granted that birth-control will solve completely such problems as the tragedy of unemployment and slum areas, international political tensions and imperialist wars. Nor is it accurate to say that the maintenance of modern civilization is a

race between growing over-population and the spread of birth-control information.

Apart from such weaknesses in the presentation of the very powerful case for birth-control, the book remains an interesting, forceful, and lucid exposition of a problem which has become vital to all who are concerned with preserving and fostering a rationally planned human society.

H. A. SHAPIRO.

**Malleson, Joan, M.B., B.S.** *Principles of Contraception: A Handbook for the General Practitioner.* London, 1936. Gollancz. Pp. 160. Price 4s. 6d.

**Pedersen, Victor Cox, M.D.** *Nature's Way of Birth Control.* London. 1936. Williams & Norgate. Pp. xvi+100. Price 3s. 6d.

DR. MALLESON'S book is exactly what it purports to be—nothing less and, mercifully, nothing more. The author is a clinician, a general practitioner highly experienced in giving birth-control instruction in private and clinic practice; and she is content to limit her exposition to the matters she knows about. This is so rare a virtue that no apology need be made for referring to it here. The reader who wants information about the chemistry and physics of contraceptives and contraception must look elsewhere for it. True the author does not wholly ignore these matters, but her interest in them is first and last clinical and is concerned only with what every clinician ought to know.

It is worth digressing for a moment to inquire whether anyone except a clinician is qualified to make any generalizations whatever on the *practice* of contraception: on such matters—to mention only a few which are discerningly discussed in Dr. Malleson's book—as the technique of fitting contraceptive appliances and instructing patients in their use, or the acceptability and adaptation of different contraceptive procedures to patients of different mental and physical dispositions. The term clinician need not, of course, be confined exclusively to practitioners of medicine. It may include nurses

and midwives, as well as other trained persons who have had a sufficiently varied experience in imparting birth-control information, and of studying, over a sufficient period, the reactions of patients to a variety of contraceptive techniques. It is thus an elastic term, but it cannot stretch so far as to include persons whose knowledge has been derived from reading books, even a large number of books and papers, on the subject, or who know the human body from diagrams and the human mind from the works of Freud, Jung and Adler. Nor can it be held to include those who have strong convictions on the subject based on their personal contraceptive practices or those of their respective wives or husbands.

One asks the question but surely it answers itself. On every page of Dr. Malleson's book there is evidence of her skilled observation, her long accumulated and systematized experience. One finds an understanding attitude towards the patient, as an individual person, that can only be obtained by many years of sympathetic personal contact with all sorts of men and women; and an undogmatism, a tolerance of other views and tastes which suggest that the author has encountered too many prejudices to retain many, if any, of her own.

If clinicians in general would follow the example of this book, and no more attempt to meddle in such matters as chemistry and physics than for instance Dr. Baker and Dr. Vogt would in matters of clinical medicine, there would be a considerable improvement in the standard of works on contraception. And if those without clinical experience would find some other outlet for their gifts of imagination—but we must not be too Utopian!

*Nature's Way of Birth Control* may be recommended as an on the whole accurate guide to the safe-period method of contraception. In beginning this book the reader may perhaps be discouraged by the muddled, ungraceful and occasionally even ungrammatical writing, or by the tub-thumping denunciations of "unnatural" contraceptive methods ("imposing on the marriage bed the practices and atmosphere of the brothel"),

or by the author's ignorance or misrepresentation of the results obtained by these methods in birth-control clinics. Nevertheless he would be well advised to persevere. There is much useful information in this book; indeed the reader may learn from it, probably the last thing the author wishes to teach, how safe-period contraception can be used as an auxiliary to the methods which our present experience has shown to be the most generally useful and dependable.

E. M. HOLMES.

## HEREDITY

**Watkins, A. E.** *Heredity and Evolution*. London, 1935. John Murray. Pp. 243. Price 7s. 6d.

**Walker, Charles.** *Evolution and Heredity*. London, 1936. A. and C. Black. Pp. 216. Price 6s.

MR. WATKINS has written an admirable book for its scope and price it is by far the best that has so far appeared and it can be warmly recommended to all who wish to understand the present day attitude of experimental geneticists to the problems of evolution. One very great virtue of the book is Mr. Watkins' studied simplicity of language. His words are mostly of one syllable, and his sentences correspondingly short and direct—nothing need be read through twice. One may not always agree with Mr. Watkins' conclusions, but there is never any doubt as to what his words mean. It must not be supposed that because Mr. Watkins has written in simple language that he has therefore "simplified" in the popular sense the problems with which he deals. On the contrary, the text is singularly free from inaccuracy and over-simplification; moreover a very large part of the book is taken up with discussing the difficulties and unsolved problems which confront the geneticist to-day. In particular he stresses the peculiar difficulties of the species problem; his discussion of this matter is excellent and few would quarrel with his conclusion that it is impossible to say exactly what is a species.

These two books have this in common